

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs, please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details

Your name	Luis Rolando Rivas Torrico
Project title	Contribution to the conservation of Bolivian reptiles
RSG reference	64.07.08
Reporting period	December 2008 May 2010
Amount of grant	£6000
Your email address	rolo_yope@yahoo.com
Date of this report	June 2010

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Reptile assessments in nine sites of Bolivia			Yes	We developed 11 assessments of the reptile fauna in 5 ecoregions of Bolivia. We provided data about the reptile structure, relative abundances, and threats in those populations.
Educational workshops			Yes	We developed educational workshops in the surroundings localities where the fieldwork was carried out. We also shared the information with some members of the communities during the fieldwork because they joined the transects and supported our work.
Educational material		Yes		We developed some educational material that at the moment is been used in the Natural History Museum in Cochabamba, where we are showing the main results of the project and also basic information about reptiles. In the following months we will print the Bolivian reptile's calendar, where we will show basic information about the Bolivian reptiles and pictures that we took during the project, all this material will be distributed for free in different areas of Bolivia. In the reptiles exhibition of the museum we developed some material that can be used by the visitors and also in different educational activities that the Museum carries out.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

During the fieldwork period we had some difficulties like blocked roads due to social problems in the area and also natural causes like landslides. In those cases we decided to postpone our fieldwork or in some cases when the time with the roads blocked was not possible to predict we decided to go to another area to carry out the fieldwork.

Also in some cases, especially in the rainy season we had the problem with the tropical disease dengue. In this case we just decided to postpone the trips to the field due that is was dangerous to go to the field in areas where the dengue was present.

For the educational workshops in some cases we did not have the interest of the local communities to assist to the workshops; in those cases we developed those with less people and also during the fieldwork and also in personal conversations with the people of the area. We know that it was not the best option but in some cases the people from the communities don't have time to go to the workshops after a complete day working in the field.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

Research

With this project we obtained data about reptiles in 11 sites of Bolivia, mainly in one rejected ecoregión of Bolivia by other biologists, the Interandean dry valleys of Bolivia. We obtained very important and very interesting data concerning reptiles. We obtained data about 64 species of reptiles in 11 sites and 5 ecoregions. Some of those are new distributional records inside the country, providing new perspectives about distribution and evolutionary process in Bolivia. Also we obtained new records for the country that at the moment we are working to publish in the near future. Together with the Bolivian Amphibian Initiative project we are supporting a thesis work of a student that is working with the amphibian and reptiles of the Interandean dry valleys of Bolivia. In this work we will provide a list of species that are important for conservation and also due the data we obtained we will propose the key areas for reptile conservation in the Interandean dry valleys using distribution predicting methods developed in this work.

Education

During the period we were working in the field we developed educational activities where we showed people basic information about reptiles and we saw that the most important information that they requested was about snakes, venomous and non venomous. People normally kill directly all kind of snakes and even lizards because they think they are dangerous and the can kill persons.

With these workshops we showed people that not all the snakes are venomous and even the venomous are not too dangerous if people are careful in the field. With a direct contact with the animals they realized that they don't have to kill all those animals and also those they are important in the ecosystem and for other species even for the humans too.

In the exhibitions in the Natural History Museum in Cochabamba we are showing people about the Bolivian reptiles, the high diversity, singularity and the threats that are affecting those species. The work that we are developing to save some of the species that we are finding. How they can support this work with reptiles and to do something to help us.

Conservation

All the data that the project obtained was very useful for the work in the **Red Book of the Threatened Vertebrates of Bolivia** in the chapter of reptiles. We provided very critical data (about distribution, threats, natural history, population status, etc.) of several species that at the moment are under a threat in this book and also some pictures of live individuals that before were not available to science.

With the thesis that our student is developing in the amphibians and reptiles of the Interandean dry valleys we will provide very important data about distribution of several species very poorly known and also we will propose key conservation areas for reptiles in the Interandean dry valleys, that in all Bolivia we don't have a protected area that protect this ecoregión.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

Since the first stages of the project we had contact with the local communities, in some cases previous the fieldwork and some other during the fieldwork during the educational workshops.

An important way of the involvement of the local communities was when they helped us during the fieldwork developing the work and also we took the advantage to try to involve in some way to the project. One example is one locality where the local community (Rosillas) is organized and is trying to work with tourism in the “Valle de los Cóndores” and after the work in the area we worked with them and now we are developing a field-guide of the reptiles of the area and they are also collecting data that will be used in this work. All this process is resulting in new records of species for Bolivia and even, new species to science. This stage of the project was very useful because we get the first contact in some cases in some areas and in the possible second stage of the project we are planning to involve more the local communities that are more interested to participate in some way in the project. Also working with the local guides and park-guards that are representatives from local communities are involved in the work of the project and now some of them asked for more detailed workshops that in the future we are planning to organize.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Due the good results of this stage of project and the interest of some communities and also the need of information and work with reptiles in Bolivia we see the urgent need to keep working in this project. We already contacted some communities, protected areas and institutions that can be interested in continue this work and we plan that in the following months we can start the second stage of this project. Also we plan to increase the efforts doing the work because we saw that in some cases it is very important to work with some species in some areas, otherwise those will be under very high risk to disappear.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

At the moment we are writing some scientific papers and we participated from others sharing the results of the project, like scientific papers, Bolivian red book of vertebrates, and articles in local newspapers. We also are sharing our results in national and international congress and meetings.

One report will be sent to the biodiversity department of the government so they can have all this information. The work of our student will be published as a thesis and later in different publications mainly to scientific people.

Also with the educational workshops the results are being shared with local communities and the people that are interested in this data. With the exhibitions in the Natural History Museum and in the different activities that we develop together with the museum all this information is shared with general public, school kids and visitors of the Museum.

We also are thinking to develop a website in a future to share all this information and to provide a tool to researchers, conservationist and people in general.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

We started later the project because the funds arrived later than we thought and also because we needed to organize some last details in the project. The end of the project was also delayed because of these reasons and also because the problems with the roads and the dengue problem during some months in the lowlands and we did not wanted to take risk with this situation. We also finished later because we wanted to use all the information and to share all the information in one week activity in the museum where we showed the main results and basic information about the Bolivian reptiles.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
General equipment (computer, digital camera, printer, etc.)	150	350	-250	We bought more equipment with extra resources
Sampling Equipment (snake stick, head torch, machete, bags, etc.)	200	250	-50	We had to buy an extra snake stick
Field equipment (Tents, backpacks, GPS, etc.)	200	280	-80	An extra tent was obtained
Laboratory material in Museum	100	100	0	
Transport and food	1500	1650	-150	We had to cover food for extra assistants
Education in communities	470	480	-10	Some extra printing material was used for workshops
Material for the educational workshops	400	400	0	
printing and office material	80	50	30	We did not use all the material
Subsistence payments	2700	2700	0	
Accident insurance	100	70	30	We found a cheaper insurance
First-aid kit	100	70	30	Cheaper first-aid kit was obtained
TOTAL	6000	6600	-600	

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

During this stage of the project we saw that the information about the Bolivian reptiles is very poor, even in areas or species where we thought was not the case, so we see that **Research** is a important

aspect that we need to increase in Bolivia, probably prioritising areas and species after a general idea that we can find at Bolivian level. For this we want to increase the research work in Bolivia and one option is to train future biologists and local communities in reptiles monitoring work so we can work in joint projects.

Due the lack of knowledge about reptiles in several areas a lot of species are used in different ways and also in some cases just killed because they think are venomous. So to **increase the awareness about reptiles** is another key step and we plan to work with local communities where some species are under a high risk locally and the distribution range is relatively small, so changing the idea about reptiles in those areas maybe we can change the attitudes of the people for this group of vertebrates.

In some areas where the species are used as medicine or just for religious purposes we want to start a local subproject to **work in conservation** of some endangered species of reptiles that annually a big part of the population is killed and with the risk that in a near future the species will disappear. For this we want to **work with local communities**, involving them and to try to protect the species and the habitat.

We also want to **involve decision makers** after our support in the Bolivian red book that was organized by the government, so in this case working closely with them we can work with them in some aspects.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes we used RSGF logo in all the educational workshops in local communities, international congress of herpetology, in the different activities in the Natural History Museum and the educational material like banners and flyers that we produced for the project and were distributed during the project. We also will use the logo for the calendars that we are printing for the following months. In all the reports and publications the logo or the name of RSGF will be indicated.

11. Any other comments?

After this stage of this project we saw the urgent need to work in some species that we found of high priority for conservation and we saw that they need immediate actions to preserve their populations and for this we need to work with local communities like other projects are starting to do in Bolivia and it is resulting in a long term investment for reptile conservation.